

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the provisions of S. Res. 27, there will now be up to 4 hours of debate on the motion, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with no motions, points of order, or amendments in order.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO ZAILA AVANT-GARDE

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I am here to talk about two things.

First, let me give a heartfelt congratulations to Zaila Avant-garde, this incredible—if we can get the poster up—14-year-old young lady, who just won the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

She is Louisiana's first winner and is the first African-American winner of this spelling bee. She dominated, getting words that I don't think any of the rest of us would have been able to spell.

By the way, I should also note that she holds a Guinness World Record for dribbling. I am told there is a YouTube video of her dribbling and, at the same time, juggling basketballs that is incredible to watch.

She has a bright future. Zaila shows that hard work and dedication bring success.

This week, Senator JOHN KENNEDY and I introduced a resolution congratulating Zaila. And Zaila, if you are watching, if you want to do it, when you are a little bit older and you want to do an internship in a Senate office in the U.S. Senate, please give me a call. Believe me, I will remember you.

And if you wish to do that internship, we are here to encourage you as you embark on the rest of your life, a life that is going to be incredibly successful.

ENERGY POLICY

Madam President, we have to talk about the White House's hypocritical and backward energy policy that is putting a target on American workers.

The Biden administration is happy to cancel U.S. pipelines and kill the jobs pipelines create, putting people in Louisiana and elsewhere in the Nation out of business, justifying it by saying this is how we lower greenhouse gas emissions. Yet they then greenlight a Russian pipeline into Germany when the emissions that come from Russian gas far exceed the emission profile of gas that is produced in Louisiana or elsewhere in our country. By the way, it also creates Russian jobs while simultaneously we are killing American jobs.

Then let's look at gas prices, which are now much higher than they were. The Biden administration is working to put a pause on oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico, but they are pleading with OPEC to increase OPEC production, saying we need more oil shipped to the United States to lower gas prices.

Just last week, the President's Press Secretary said the administration is encouraging OPEC countries to reach agreements to increase production

while they are simultaneously stymieing U.S. production and the U.S. jobs that go along with the production of U.S. oil and gas.

And it just begs the question: The administration is helping Russians and the Russian economy; they are helping OPEC nations and workers in OPEC; why don't we think about helping American workers? It just cannot be understood.

I am demanding; we are demanding; we are pleading not with OPEC but with the administration to leave our jobs and the livelihoods of Louisiana workers and American workers alone.

Let's just speak about the Louisiana industry. The oil and gas industry in Louisiana is a major economic and industrial force, a force for good, and the benefits from the environmental perspective must be stated. The United States is a global leader in decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and this happened because of increased production of U.S. natural gas. We simultaneously became a net exporter of energy, helping other nations lower their emission profile as well. But what we have seen in the last few months, you would not understand that.

As I mentioned earlier, President Biden canceled the Keystone XL Pipeline and 11,000 jobs with it, but, again, Russian pipelines are OK. The administration removed sanctions from Russia, clearing the way for the construction of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline—cementing, by the way, Europe's reliance upon Russian gas. Again, Russian gas, the production of it, emits far more greenhouse gas emissions than the production of American and Louisiana natural gas.

It is almost, if you will, a quadruple whammy: weakening U.S. security, increasing global greenhouse gas emissions, increasing gas prices, and killing American jobs. That is what this administration's policies have been doing. It begs the question: Why don't we green-light U.S. pipelines as opposed to green-lighting Russian pipelines?

Americans across the country, every time they fill up their tanks, feel these punches, and they are tired of it. The average price of gasoline has now been over \$3 a gallon since May, clocking in at \$3.15 as of today, and it is only going up—expected that gas prices will rise another 10 to 20 cents through the end of August. Louisiana is a bit luckier. Because of our position as an energy powerhouse, the gas prices here at home are still averaging about \$2.75—not going down anytime soon.

While the administration is actively trying to kill domestic energy jobs, they are working to increase production of oil overseas—again, asking the OPEC cartel to increase production so there is more oil to lower gas prices. Why don't we just produce more oil in the United States of America?

The administration says that they are killing jobs in the United States because of carbon emissions, but when

you produce oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico and you bring it to our shores, it has the lowest emissions profile of any oil and gas that we use in our country. You almost have to ask, what is it about the U.S. oil and gas worker that the administration doesn't like?

In 2019—just speaking about Louisiana—in 2019, oil and gas operations supported nearly 250,000 Louisiana jobs, about 1 out of every 9 jobs in my State. The oil and gas industry provided \$73 billion to the State's gross domestic product, more than a quarter. Through taxes alone, it accounted for \$4.5 billion going directly to coastal restoration, environmental improvement projects, schools, infrastructures, roads—you name it—making life better for the citizens of my State.

It has been only 6 months of the Biden administration, but every day, that target on the back of an oil and gas worker and on their family's future gets bigger and bigger and bigger.

One more time, let me say in conclusion, the Biden administration's working against U.S. oil and gas production is making other countries stronger; it is making us weaker. It weakens America's security, it increases global greenhouse gas emissions, it increases gas prices, and it kills jobs. We need better policy for our country, for my State, and for our workers.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

CUBA

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would like to speak about a topic I spoke about before, and that is our policy toward Cuba. I couldn't help but think, as I look at the Cubans protesting in the street, especially as I see so many people in the streets in places where both my wife Marcelle and I have walked, and actually our granddaughter Sophia, where we know a number of the people there, and we see them protesting, it hits twice as hard. They are demanding greater freedom and economic opportunity. This illustrates a widespread hardship and hunger and the need for fundamental change in Cuba.

Human rights are universal. Cuban people are no different from people anywhere in the world. They want to be able to speak freely. They don't want fear of retribution.

We have been told that the Biden administration is conducting a review of the Trump administration's policy. It is the Trump administration's policy toward Cuba which is now in effect. There is nothing unusual about that review. New administrations regularly conduct such reviews. But it is now mid-July, and the key question that needs to be answered is not very complicated.

It is axiomatic that we have profound disagreements with the Cuban Government. They have held power since 1959. They have held power by outlawing opposition political parties. Dissent is often punished with physical abuse and

imprisonment. The government's crackdown on the recent protests, calling the protesters counterrevolutionaries and blaming the United States for Cuba's ills, is predictable. They have blamed us for many years.

I look beyond the headlines. There is no doubt that the Cuban people, many of whom I have met, and I know they struggle from day to day to make ends meet—they want greater freedom, and they want a better life. They have told me that. They have told Marcelle. They have told the other Senators, Republicans and Democrats, who have traveled there with me. But the question now is, How should we respond? It comes down to whether you believe that we should continue a policy of unilateral sanctions, which have been in effect for decades, much of my life—they have completely failed to achieve their objectives, and they have contributed to the daily misery of Cuba's people—or should we instead pursue a policy of engagement?

I believe President Obama got it right. You know, one definition of “insanity” is to keep doing what has repeatedly and demonstrably failed. In Cuba, it is worse than that. Our policy, which does not work, has emboldened Cuba's hardliners, and it provides an excuse for Cuba's authorities to crack down on those who dare to protest. But worse than that, it has created a vacuum. And guess who is exploiting that vacuum a few miles from our shores? Well, of course, the Russians and the Chinese. And we undercut the Cuban private sector.

By any objective measure, it is time for President Biden to act on his pledge to “reverse the failed Trump policies” that have “inflicted harm on Cubans and their families” and “done nothing to advance democracy and human rights.”

I feel that if we allow those Trump sanctions to persist, we only undermine these principles. They restrict the freedom of movement and economic autonomy of the Cuban people. They compound the suffering caused by the Cuban Government's own repressive policies and well-known economic mismanagement. In fact, the repression in Cuba didn't decrease during the Trump administration; it increased.

Biden administration officials have repeatedly said that democracy and human rights will be at the core of our policy toward Cuba. Well, I have been a defender of those principles for 50 years, and human rights and political freedom should be a key element not just of our policy but also of our engagement with Cuba.

But, again, the question is how best to support the Cuban people who seek greater freedom and a better life. Is it to continue a policy that has achieved neither, which is likely to be used as an excuse by those in power to further stifle dissent?

In fact, engagement with Cuba will honor our commitment to human rights and the recognition that Amer-

ican presence can be a positive force in closed societies. That is the argument that Secretary Blinken and others, both Democrats and Republicans, have rightly made in defense of diplomacy and engagement throughout the world.

Neither engagement nor continuation of the Trump sanctions can guarantee Cuba's political transformation. That is ultimately a decision for the Cuban people. But—but—but engagement stands a far greater chance of creating a new dynamic beneficial to the Cuban people.

President Obama's engagement with Cuba showed that U.S. travel, exchanges, remittances, and business ties expand opportunities and information and income for Cubans, boosting the private sector and increasing economic independence.

I visited a number of these people, often young people starting their own businesses—small businesses, private businesses—doing it because of President Obama's engagement with Cuba. It also initiated working-level discussions on a wide range of issues, from law enforcement to property claims, to public health and environmental protection.

Raul Castro and his generation are in the process of handing over power to the next generation. I compliment him on that. The current leadership is rooted in the past, but they are also deep in a debate about how to reform the economy, how to regulate the private sector, and how to navigate citizen demands for pluralism, something they have not seen. I believe American citizens and diplomats alike should participate in that debate—and not from a distance, not from Washington and New York and elsewhere, but down there.

Cuba's private sector offers a particular opportunity because Cuba's economic policies are changing in ways that enable U.S. engagement to have greater impact than was impossible even during the Obama years.

A new law will soon greatly expand the legal scope for private business activity, and another is expected to give entrepreneurs legal status that will permit them to receive foreign investment. The government is enabling private businesses to import supplies and export products.

Any of us who come from States that have an agricultural industry should look at this. For the first time, the Cuban Government is calling for foreign investment in private farm co-operatives. But for U.S. citizens and businesses to be able to engage, several steps are needed.

We have to remove the restrictions that limit the flow of remittances, both family assistance and “donative” remittances mainly used to pay and support private entrepreneurs.

Restore the travel regulations that were in effect when the Obama-Biden administration left office. This includes eliminating or significantly reducing the Cuba Restricted List of

business entities, ending the prohibition on lodging in Cuban hotels, and allowing U.S. airlines to service provincial airports.

Reverse the frivolous “state sponsor of terrorism” designation that former Secretary Pompeo almost flippantly announced 9 days before leaving office.

Suspend title III of the Helms-Burton Act, as all the Presidents did from 1996 to 2019, Republican and Democratic Presidents alike.

These regulatory changes would permit the private sector to activate and would be no burden on the U.S. Government. It would be the private sector activating.

We don't need some grand diplomacy to do this. Dialogue with Cuba can resume at the working level. Human rights advocacy at whatever level should be a key part of any engagement policy, as it is in our relations with other autocratic governments.

There would be broad support in this country for a return to engagement. There would be vocal support from U.S. agriculture, from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, from many Cuban Americans, and from many in Cuba whose lives have become immeasurably worse due to the COVID pandemic. Given time to work, engagement policies would expand the constituency for engagement in Miami as more Cuban Americans travel and build economic ties.

This is also how you make progress with Cuba on cases of political prisoners or other violations of human rights. You don't make this progress by making ultimatums or threats or repeating slogans that sound great but achieve nothing in practice. It can't be by conditioning U.S. aid because we don't gave aid to Cuba. We do to some military dictatorships, of course, like Egypt. It can't be by canceling sales of U.S. weapons. We don't sell weapons to Cuba the same way we do to some other repressive governments, like Saudi Arabia. It is through building relations by making progress on issues where we share interests, which can create the conditions for progress—making progress on issues where we differ, like human rights and property claims.

I don't expect we are going to come down here and everybody is going to say: We all agree on everything. Let's talk about the things where we do have differences. But you don't talk about it—you don't get anywhere by making ultimatums from a country away.

I hope the Biden administration will be guided first and foremost by what is in our national interest but also in the interests of the Cuban and American people. Candidate Biden was right when he pledged, and I repeat, to “reverse the failed Trump policies” that have “inflicted harm on Cubans and their families” and “done nothing to enhance democracy and human rights.”

It is time to act on that pledge. It is time to encourage so many of these

young people—young students, young entrepreneurs, young business owners like those I visited and met with in Cuba—it is time to say: Yes, you can be part of the world. Yes, you can work with those in our country who want to make your life better. If we do that, we will see the real change—not slogans of change but substantive change.

I see my distinguished friend and colleague from Ohio on the floor. I will ask to put my full statement in the RECORD.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank my colleague from Vermont, the President pro tempore of the U.S. Senate.

I was able to listen to some of his remarks regarding Cuba. This is a truly historic time in that island country. The demonstrations, I am told, are as large as they have been since at least 1959.

My hope is that the countries of the Americas, all of which I just visited—four of them down in Latin America—that believe in democracy, that believe in the ability for people to come together and gather and express their continues, that believe in strong human rights, would come together and support the Cuban people at this critical point.

My understanding is, there are some opportunities to ensure that internet access continues among those demonstrating. My understanding is that there are human rights abuses occurring even now as we talk with regard to those demonstrators.

I appreciate my colleague. He has spent a lot of time trying to take the Cuban relationship, which has been a fraught one, and make it better. My hope is that what we are seeing right now on the streets of Havana and elsewhere around that country will lead to a better day for the people of Cuba.

LATIN AMERICA CODEL

Madam President, I did just return from a bipartisan trip to the area. I went with Senators TIM KAINE, JOHN HOEVEN, BEN RAY LUJÁN, MIKE CRAPO, and CHRIS COONS to Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, and Guatemala.

I want to talk a bit about what we learned and a bit about some of the ways forward to help these countries and, frankly, to help ourselves here in America more by changing some of our policies—not just asking them to change what they do but changing some things we do.

It was an opportunity to show our support for these countries. These are our neighbors in Latin America. All of them are allies. I understand this is the first major congressional delegation trip since the COVID-19 crisis began to abate, and we chose Latin America. They are our neighbors. They are at our front door, in fact.

I did find when we were down there that there was a lot of appreciation for the fact that we were showing up and talking about America's role in the re-

gion and, frankly, the role of China and even Russia and Iran and other countries—at least in the Venezuelan area with regard to Russia and Iran and Cuba. It has been increasing at a time when sometimes the U.S. presence is not felt as acutely. So it is important for us to be there as a country that is still a beacon of hope and opportunity for those who seek democracy and freedom and human rights. That is our role, in my view, is to continue to be that model but also to provide assistance, more trade, to provide a way for these countries to be able to see more prosperity and peace themselves. So I thought it was an important trip and an important opportunity to be there.

We had the opportunity to meet with the President of each of these four countries. In fact, none of our meetings with the respective Presidents went for less than 2 hours. These were very honest dialogues. We got into some depth into the issues.

We were able to discuss the COVID-19 crisis. Each President was appreciative of the fact that the American taxpayer has helped to provide some vaccines to these countries. It is not everything they want, of course. They still need a lot more vaccines because their vaccine rates are far lower than ours. But each of these countries has suffered in terms of the impact of COVID-19, and each of these countries is eager to get back on their feet, to get the economy working again, to get their people back to work, back to school, back to a more normal life just like in this country.

We talked about the surge of migration to the United States and the pressure on our southern border but also here in America, in the interior, what is happening with regards to more and more migrants surging at the border. We are looking at 170,000, even 180,000 per month now in the months of April, May, and June. So we do have to deal with that issue.

Many of these countries are sending their young people and others to our borders. By the way, the Presidents of these countries all said the same thing. They want their people to stay in their country. They want their people to stay there to be part of the future of their country, to be able to help develop the economy and the prosperity that they seek in their democracies.

Sometimes that is not understood even by American policymakers, who think, with all great intentions—who are opening up more in the sense of providing a magnet, really, pulling people to the north.

That treacherous journey north is also something that many of these Presidents commented on. Ecuador, as an example—you might not think of it as one of the countries that send a lot of migrants to the United States. You think of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala. My understanding is, they surpassed Honduras last month in the number of migrants they are sending to our border from Ecuador. They want

those people to stay in Ecuador and be citizens there and help contribute to that country's growth.

Unfortunately, the impact with COVID-19 has made things more difficult in each of these countries. So their economies have been weakened just as ours was weakened. They were hit even harder and even longer, again, with the lack of vaccines. Again, we are helping them with that. I support that. I think it is very important.

By the way, the Chinese are also selling a lot of vaccines throughout Latin America and trying very hard to influence what is going on in this part of the world, which is our hemisphere. The United States needs to be there for many reasons, and that is one.

We also talked about the need for the continued battle against corruption in these countries and throughout Latin America and to ensure that you do have more transparency and a governing environment that is driven by the rule of law so there can be more investment from the United States and more trade between us.

In Ecuador in particular, we talked about the need for a new trade agreement, which I support, which would really help to strengthen our ties with Ecuador at a critical time in their history but also would be good economically for both countries' mutual benefit.

With regard to Colombia, Guatemala, and, of course, Mexico, we have trade agreements, but we talked about how to improve those trade agreements—how they operate and are implemented on the ground. I am a former U.S. Trade Representative. I helped to negotiate the Colombia trade agreement. I also helped with regard to the CAFTA agreement, which included Guatemala. Those agreements were helpful at the time. They could be even more helpful if they could be improved in certain respects, and we talked specifically about that.

Each President basically said the same thing: They would prefer trade to aid. They are not against U.S. assistance. They appreciate it, and we do assist those countries in a number of different ways. Yet what they really want is the ability to have more commerce, more U.S. investment, more jobs—therefore, more economic growth and more opportunities for their young people so they will stay in those countries. Continued support from the United States is crucial in all of these matters.

With regard to COVID, we can supply more personal protective gear. They still need it. Certainly, the donations of vaccines have been very helpful. When we were in Guatemala, the Biden administration announced it was delivering 1.2 million doses of vaccines, approximately doubling the number of Guatemalans who can now be vaccinated. Now, I will tell you that is still only something like 10 or 12 percent, so it is still relatively low. This is a first good step, and we need to try to